The Impacts of the Sustainable Development Goals on Forests and People – Conclusions and the Way Forward

Georg Winkel, Glenn Galloway, Carol J. Pierce Colfer, Wil de Jong, Pia Katila and Pablo Pacheco
Georg.winkel@.efi.int

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1 Forests play a key role in sustainable development – but the forest - people relationship is complex

• Forests – one of three major life supporting ecosystems
• Forest – people interface: an ongoing co-evolution process (forest transition)
• People are not people – winners and losers of forest transition (at different scales and across generations)

→ Political nature of governing the forest people interface

Source: Gregersen (2013)
2 The SDGs include partially conflicting visions for forests and people: dealing with trade-offs is unavoidable

- SDGs: a compilation of distinct development paradigms (with potential trade-offs)
- Fundamental question: economic growth as solution or problem?
  → Trade-offs need assessment and priority setting
3 The SDGs impacts on forests and people are context dependent and diverse

• Impact of SDGs – depend on implementation channels in respective context
• Distinct forest related phases in forest transition and development trajectories may determine impact
• “Rich forests, poor people” – possible to go alternative forest transition pathways?

→ Global interdependencies matter – they provide leverage points for “shared responsibility”
4 There are fundamental values and principles that may guide sustainable development related to forests and people

SDGs provide fundamental values/principles for decision making

1. Basic values: people, planet, prosperity, peace, and partnerships – also for forest dependent people

2. Forest specific considerations: irreplaceability, intergenerational responsibility

3. Procedural guidelines: “good governance” – transparency, inclusiveness

→ Boundaries for development and principles how to maneuver within them
5 Sustainable development at the forest–people interface depends on sustainable development at large scale

- Forest–people interface is largely driven by “mega-factors”
  - Population growth, economic growth & consumption, investment, climate change, governance (failures) → cross sectoral linkages are critical
  → Research needs to tackle those: e.g. financing, trade, livelihoods and related policies
  → Full accounting of forest ecosystem services and related value chains → enable and diversify forest related development

Source: https://ourworldindata.org/world-population-growth
6 The planet is changing rapidly – Sustainable development will require learning and adaptation of targets and their implementation

- SDGs – a potpourri of development paradigms at a certain time
- Change is unavoidable - learning and adaptation needed
- Critical role of research: provide information on social, ecological and economic change – but also need to engage with society
Final Remarks...and the way forward

1. Forests are essential for sustainable development – but forest & people is not the same
2. The SDGs could have different impacts on forests and people depending on context
3. Facing our own growing needs – use forests sustainably is best to conserve them
4. Essential need to consider the full spectrum of ecosystem services forests provide
5. Trade-offs need to be made transparent
6. Invest in the human part of the forest-people interface – “informed optimism”
7. Invest in global collaboration and understanding in science and policy
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